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THE STORY OF 30 YEARS STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

A Consolidated account of 30 years' effort
in the cause of Christians of Scheduled Caste origin

NATIONAL CONVENTION OF CHRISTIAN
LEADERS ON THE PLIGHT OF
CHRISTIANS OF SCHEDULED CASTE ORIGIN
(NCCL/P/CSCO)

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1. Caste is an integral part of Hindu fabric. There are four well-defined divisions of castes or varnas in Hindu society. These four castes or Chathurvarnas occupying the upper divisions are the real masters and supreme leaders in the society. Those who could not or would not be fitted in the stratifications called "castes", which term strictly covered the four varnas, were Panchamas, the fifth class, or loosely, avarnas i.e., caste outside the pale. These people, who were subjected through the ages to indignities, disabilities and untouchability etc., until they sank into a sub-human existence, misery, squalor and poverty, were until some years ago described as "Depressed classes"—a term implying inferiority. The Government of India Act of 1935 replaced this term by what is now called "Scheduled Castes". The change was apparently due to Gandhiji's fight against the Communal Award of 1932 which had treated the Depressed Classes as a separate community for purposes of election. Moreover the term "Depressed Classes" was repugnant to Gandhiji who gave them the name of Harijans or God's people. But "the Scheduled Castes" is the term recognised by the Constitution. Article 341 of the Constitution of India confers on the President of India power to specify the castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of the Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes. "The object of this Article is to provide additional protection to the members of the Scheduled Castes having regard to the economic and educational backwardness from which they suffer".

2. In exercise of the power vested under the said Article, the President promulgated the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order No. 19 of 1950 specifying such castes. In the Schedule appended to the Order are given the names of such Castes in the various States, who are designated as "Scheduled Castes" for the purpose of the Constitution. As per this Order issued on 10th August 1950 no person who

professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste, with a proviso regarding certain castes resident in Punjab and East Punjab States Union, whether they profess the Hindu or Sikh religion. Consequently a member of any of the Scheduled Castes enumerated in the Order would cease to be a member thereof the very moment he is converted to any religion different from Hinduism. On such conversion a member of the Scheduled Caste would lose all the benefits he was enjoying before. Religion alone has been thus made the material criterion of the membership of the Scheduled Caste.

3. Following this Order, as per the Resolution No. 42/21/49 NGS passed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India dated 13-9-1950 read with the said Order, all the departments of the Government began to treat the Scheduled Castes who professed Hinduism only as Scheduled Castes and hence denied to the converts from those castes all the benefits and privileges they were enjoying before conversion. The Order therefore naturally caused widespread uneasiness and deep resentment among the Christians.

4. It can be said that with the promulgation of this Order of 1950, began the long and arduous struggle for justice and for redressal of grievances of Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin. The Christian Community then launched a peaceful agitation on their behalf directed towards both the Central and State Governments from various angles. It would be interesting and edifying to know the different phases covered and the progress made in the struggle. The following pages provide a brief summary of the various attempts made and steps taken so far to obtain justice and equal treatment for the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin who are being discriminated against on the basis of religion.

5. On 24-10-1950 the late Sri G.X. Francis, President of Catholic Regional Committee of Nagpur sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Nehru pointing out the hardship and injustice caused to the Christians on account of the Order. The reply of the Prime Minister dated 7-11-1950 is that "all State aids and facilities are to be given not only to

the Hindu Scheduled Caste but also to all other educationally and socially backward classes whether they profess Hinduism, Christianity or any other religion. Only in the matter of reservation of seats, no person who professes a religion other than Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of Scheduled Castes and accordingly no Indian Christian can be regarded as belonging to the Scheduled Castes for the purpose of the Constitution".

6. On 22-11-1950 Sri P. Chacko M.L.A., on behalf of the Backward Class Christians Federation Travancore-Cochin, submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Nehru complaining that State aids and facilities were withdrawn from Christians belonging to Backward classes. The reply given by the Prime Minister has made it clear that no distinction is to be made between Hindu Scheduled Castes and Christian Backward Classes in the matter of giving State aids and facilities and that the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order only relates to the question of reservation of seats.

7. Rev. Fr. Jerome D'Souza, sj., and Dr. H.C. Mookerjee, both then members of Parliament called on President Rajendra Prasad on 6-12-1950 and appraised him of the misgivings and resentment of the Christian Community that has been caused by the Order. The reply received by them on 17-12-1950 makes it clear that "that is not the intention of the Government of India that there should be any difference on grounds of religion or Caste. The only effect intended by this Order is that converts to Christianity will no longer be entitled to the political privileges of reservation of seats in Parliament or the State Assembly. The reply further stated that it was not intended that such Christians if they are in fact backward should be denied privileges such as scholarships to which they were entitled prior to the setting up of the Constitution.

8. The Catholic Union of India took up the cause of the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin at its annual general meeting held in Mangalore in January, 1951. They passed a resolution drawing the attention of the Government to the blatant discrimination and injustice against these Christians

and requested all the diocesan units in different parts of India to take up the issue seriously and represent the matter to the Chief Ministers of their respective States.

9. As a result of these representations and memoranda, the Government of India issued directives to the State Governments clarifying the position vis-a-vis the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order. The letter No. 51/13/51 Public dated 2-2-1951 of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has made it clear that by the Order it was not intended that Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity, if they are in fact backward should be denied privileges such as scholarships to which they were entitled prior to the Constitution. In the letter No. F. 3-4/50/54 dated 13-2-1951 the Ministry of Education, Government of India has expressed its view that such Indian Christians who are educationally and economically backward deserve Government help for their uplift and that for the purpose of award of scholarships they may be included in the list of other backward classes.

10. In the D.O. letter No. 32/51 S.C.S.T. dated 11-4-1951 by Sri. L.M. Shrikant, Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India addressed to Major A.F.W. Da Costa the then General Secretary of the Catholic Union of India it is stated that steps will be taken to see that no injustice is done with regard to giving of scholarships, freeships and grants to such institutions where Christian converts are receiving education.

11. In spite of the clarification and interpretation contained in the letters of the President and the Prime Minister and also of the several Ministers of the Government of India, some of the State Governments refused to accept the directives or advice of the Centre. They stuck to their right to interpret the Constitution Order in a sense which excludes the Christians from the Scheduled Castes on the plea that there is no caste in Christianity.

12. The struggle for Justice therefore continued. The Christian members of the Parliament submitted a memorandum to the President of India alleging discrimination against the Scheduled Caste Christians with regard to the grant of educational, social and economic assistance to them.

On 30-5-1951 Fr. Jerome D'Souza, sj., raised this matter in Parliament again and pleaded not to refuse the concessions and help to those who by a personal decision have chosen Christianity for their faith.

13. On behalf of the Scheduled Caste Converts, the Secretary of Paravan Welfare Association of Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu) submitted a memorandum to the Government of Madras on 23-5-1952 requesting to extend the concessions admissible to Scheduled Castes to the converts therefrom also. In the reply dated 2-1-1952 the Government of Madras has pointed out that according to the President's Order of 1950 converts to Christianity or any other religion cannot be regarded as Scheduled Castes for purposes of reservation and other concessions in the matter of appointment to the Public Services and that such converts are however regarded as Backward Classes and they are eligible for half fee concessions in Schools and full fee remission in Colleges.

14. The erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State (now included in Kerala) was in the fore-front of the struggle for Justice and equal treatment for the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin, right from the time when the President's Order was promulgated. In December 1952 on the initiative of Sri. P.M. Marcose, a Scheduled Caste Christian M.L.A., and Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil, several Christian Political leaders including M/s. T.J. Mathew, Mathew Maniangadan, V.O., Marcose and P.C. Cherian submitted a memorandum to President Rajendra Prasad and Prime Minister Nehru requesting to end the discrimination shown to the Christian Harijans. Following this, protest meetings were held at different parts of the State when resolutions with identical requests were forwarded to Central and State Governments.

15. When the Backward Classes Commission, appointed by the President of India with Sri Khakasaheb Kalelkar M.P. as Chairman under Article 340 of the Constitution of India, visited Travancore-Cochin State in 1954, leaders of the Christian Community represented to them that converts from Scheduled Castes should be treated in effect as Scheduled Castes so that they may be enabled to get all the State aids and facilities enjoyed by their Hindu brethren and by

themselves before conversion. The Commission recommended that these converts should be recognised as Backward and given all concessions and facilities available to the Other Backward Classes. Accordingly Scheduled Castes converted to Christianity were included in the list of Other Backward Classes.

16. The Christian Community in the State was not satisfied with this because the converts could not thereby be entitled to all the State aids and rights which their brethren in Scheduled Castes were enjoying. Among others, All Kerala Catholic Congress took up this matter with the State Government. On 24-9-1955 Sri. P.J. Sebastian M.L.A. the then President of the Congress submitted a memorandum signed by 46 M.L.As. and along with other Christian leaders and several other members of the State Assembly represented to the State Chief Minister Sri Panampilly Govinda Menon the necessity to extend to members of Scheduled Castes converted to Christianity, State aids and facilities on the same scale at which these aids and facilities were being given to Hindu members of the Scheduled Castes. The Chief Minister in his reply dated 26-11-1955, advised that since it is the Government of India alone which can act in this matter that Government may be moved. He was kind enough to send a Report to the Central Government in November, 1955 making recommendations on the basis of the representations made on behalf of the Scheduled Caste Christians. M/s. P.J. Sebastian, K.M. George, C.A. Mathew, A.C. Chacko, V.V. Sebastian, K.T. Thomas and P.M. Marcose, all christian M.L.As. had submitted resignation letters to the Chief Minister Panampilly Govinda Menon on 19-2-1956 stating that they were resigning from the Congress Parliamentary Party unless the Harijan Christian problem was solved.

17. Fr. J. Kochuparambil (Director) Mr. C.P. Chacko (President) and Mr. P.C. Paul (Secretary) of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha submitted a memorandum to Sri U.N. Dhebar, President of National Congress in April, 1956 urging for the solution of the Harijan Christian problem. When T.C. State was under the president's Rule, Christian M.L.As., including M/s P.J. Sebastian, K.M. George and P.M. Marcose submitted a memorandum to the Advisor Sri P.S. Rao on 6-5-1956.

18. In 1956 the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order was amended by an Act of Parliament. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act 63 of 1956 provided the inclusion in and the exclusion from the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, of certain castes and tribes and matters connected therewith. As per the Amendment Act, paragraph 3 of the Order was substituted by a new paragraph. The main effect of this amendment is that besides Hindus, all persons professing the Sikh religion in any part of India also are included in the Schedule to the Order. According to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order as extant no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu or Sikh religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.

19. By an order G.O. MS. No. 731 dated 25-4-1957 the Government of Madras decided to do away with the distinction between Harijans and Harijan converts to Christianity in the matter of educational concessions and they accordingly directed that all the educational concessions applicable to Harijans be extended to Harijans converted to Christianity also with effect from the academic year of 1957.

20. On a representation made by the Secretary of Paravan Welfare Association, Tuticorin, through his letter dated 10-7-57 the Government of Madras have made it clear in their G.O. MS. No. 388 dated 4-3-1958 that converts to Christianity or any other religion need not produce any certificate of conversion for the purpose of educational concessions.

21. As a result of several representations from Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha, the Backward Class Christian Federation and other organisations, Travancore-Cochin Government by their orders dated 20-2-1957 and 12-10-1957 extended several educational concessions to Christian converts from Scheduled Castes, without any restriction regarding income.

22. The late Archbishop Thomas Pothacamury of Bangalore in his letters dated 24-10-1958 and 30-10-1958 to Prime Minister Nehru and Union Minister Pandit Pant respectively brought to their notice the disabilities and the

horrible condition which the Scheduled Caste Christians suffer. Prime Minister Nehru in his reply dated 7-11-1958 reiterated that in fact the law or any rule does not recognise so far as he knows the Scheduled Caste Christians and that unless there is a change in the law itself the Government cannot go beyond it.

23. Representatives of Harijan Christian organisations submitted a memorandum to the then Kerala Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboothiripad on 29-7-1958 requesting to extend to Harijan converts all educational concessions on a par with their Hindu brethren. When Kerala came under the spell of President's rule, Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha submitted a similar memorandum to the then State Governor Dr. Ramakrishna Rao on 19-10-1959.

24. Again urging immediate solution of the Harijan Christian problem, Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil, and Sri. C.P. Chacko, Director and President respectively of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha and Sri P. Chacko, M.L.A. submitted a memorandum to President Rajendra Prasad, Prime Minister Nehru, Home Minister Pant and Congress President Smt. Indira Gandhi at New Delhi on 12-12-1959. A similar memorandum was submitted to Kerala Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai on 21-4-1960 by Harijan Christian leaders including M/s. C.P. Chacko, P.C. Paul and P. Chacko, M.L.A.

25. To a letter submitted on 23-7-1960 by Paravan Uplift Association, Madras, the Director of Harijan Welfare Department, Madras Government replied on 2-8-1960 stating that Christians belonging to Backward and Scheduled Castes are not eligible for ameliorative Schemes under the Harijan Welfare Department.

26. In the Government memorandum dated 18-10-1960 issued by the Under Secretary, Mysore Government it was directed that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes converted to other religions who are re-converted to Hinduism shall be deemed to have converted to their original classification and would be entitled to all privileges as provided for the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

27. In November, 1960, members of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha under the guidance of Kerala Catholic Congress undertook a long march on foot from Chalakudy to the State Capital at Trivandrum when the State Assembly was in session and offered Satyagraha there shouting slogans against the discrimination. The State Harijan Welfare Minister Kunhabu and Food Minister E.P. Poulose along with M.L.As. visited the satyagrahis and invited the leaders to the Secretariat for talks. A huge public meeting was also held there, the same day at which speeches were made by leaders of different political parties including many M.L.As.—supporting the legality of the demands of the Scheduled Caste Christians and a memorandum was presented to the Chief Minister.

28. Convener, Backward Class Federation Central Action Council, Kottayam (Kerala) submitted a memorandum to the Government on 24-3-1960 requesting that Christian converts from Scheduled Castes be granted relaxation of upper age limit by 5 years instead of 3 years for purposes of appointment to the Public Services as in the case of candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. By an order G.O. MS. 170 dated 28-4-1966, the Government enhanced the upper age limit in cases of adult converts and their children from 3 to 5 years as in the case of Scheduled Castes.

29. On 20-7-1960 Prof. A. Soares, the then President of Catholic Union of India forwarded a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra requesting that educational and economic concessions available to the Scheduled Caste Christians also and in the matter of distribution of waste lands and the financial assistance given to the new settlers, those Christians may be given a share. In the reply letter No. SCW/2260/35231-M Educational and Social Welfare Department of the Government of Maharashtra dated 29-9-1960 it is stated that Government cannot see its way to accept the request made by the Catholic Union and declined to receive a deputation of representative Catholics to discuss the issues raised in the memorandum.

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30. On 27-2-1961 Kerala Catholic Congress submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai requesting an early solution of the Harijan Christian problem. As a result of this, Harijan Christian students were made eligible for stipends in colleges on a par with their Hindu brethren. The representatives of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Chief Minister R. Sankar on 27-6-1962.

31. In his letter dated 5-12-1961 addressed to the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Prof. A. Soares, the then President of C.U.I. had prayed that:

- a) educational concessions by way of freeship, scholarships, boarding fees and admission to reserved seats in institutions may be made available to the Christian converts on the same terms as Scheduled Castes;
- b) distribution of land to the landless Harijan Christians may be made on an equal footing;
- c) bonus or grants for houses, wells, seed, manure, implements etc., may be given to the converts without discrimination and;
- d) other State aids and benefits may be given to the Converts also.

In their reply dated 9-1-1962 the Government stated that Scheduled Caste Converts to Christianity are not eligible for any privileges or concessions previously admissible to them as members of Scheduled Castes.

32. The Bishop of Amravathi convened a mass meeting in February, 1962 at Elichour in Ahmednagar District to protest against the discrimination and demand for Justice towards the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin. It was a time when the local Neo-Buddhists were pressurising the Christian Harijans of Ahmednagar and Amravati areas to join them with the lure of benefits. The disheartened Catholics took up the cause of the poor Christian Harijans in a challenging mood.

33. Rev. Bro. Rosius, Chief Promoter, Diocesan Social Works addressed a letter 30-8-1962 to the Governor of Madras pointing out the discrimination against Scheduled Caste converts in giving aids. In the reply dated 7-12-1962 the Government of Madras pointed out that Harijan converts are eligible for all the concessions admissible to the Hindu Harijans from the State funds and no discrimination is shown against them in the matter of giving aid to Harijan converts; but only Hindu Harijans are eligible for the benefits under certain schemes financed by the Government of India.

34. In the Government of India Ministry of Home Affairs letter D.O. No. Dy. 176/62 SCT. IV dated 3-2-1962 addressed to Prof. A. Soares, President C.U.I. it was stated that the Government of India has suggested to the State Governments that in drawing up lists of Other Backward Classes it would be better to follow the economic criterion than go on the basis of caste.

35. Prof. A. Soares on behalf of Catholic Union of India submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of U.P. State also on 15-1-1962 praying for educational concessions and other benefits for the Scheduled Caste Christians similar to those he had submitted to other State Chief Ministers.

36. On 18-10-1966 Cardinal Gracias, President, C.B.C.I. addressed a letter to the Prime Minister expressing on behalf of all the Bishops of India their disappointment and frustration over the problem of Scheduled Caste Christians for which the Government has found no effective solution so far in spite of several representations over the years and pleading for equality of treatment in keeping with the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India.

37. Shri G.S. Reddi, M.P. together with other Christian members of Parliament presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister on 27-11-1969 pointing out the necessity to meet out Justice and equal treatment to Scheduled Caste Christians who are economically and socially backward as their Hindu brethren.

38. A Harijan Christian, barber by profession, in Tanjore District got some equipments free for his work from the Government of Madras in 1969. But they were

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confiscated the very next day on the ground that he is a Christian. Although Chev. J.C. Rayan, the then President of C.U.I. represented this matter to the Government through his letter dated 27-5-1969, it was of no avail.

39. In reply to the letter dated 23-10-1969 sent by Chev. J.C. Rayan the then President of C.U.I. the Government of Maharashtra has in their communication dated 3-12-1969 stated that in the State of Maharashtra since 1960 the Scheduled Caste converts to Buddhism only are held eligible for all the concessions admissible to Scheduled Castes except the statutory concessions under the Constitution.

40. Kerala Backward Christian Federation began a 15-week satyagraha (sit-in) of its members before the Government Headquarters in December, 1969. Some 300 satyagrahis were imprisoned during this struggle. The Satyagraha was withdrawn and the satyagrahis were released on the assurance given by the then Chief Minister Sri C. Achutha Menon that his Government will ask the Central Government to make the Christians of Scheduled Caste origin eligible for special political, educational and financial benefits. The Chief Minister told the press in December, 1969 that Kerala State Government will press the Central Government for a national decision extending all privileges and concessions of Hindu Harijans to their Christian counter-parts.

41. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister on 26-3-1970 by C.B.C.I. it was pointed out that in a caste-ridden society the Scheduled Castes who embrace Christianity or Islam are subjected to the same disabilities throughout the country as their Hindu brethren and the discrimination against such converts is based only on the ground of religion.

42. Sri P. Chacko, Secretary to Avasa Christava Samyuktha Samara Samithi, Kerala sent a petition to the Government of Kerala on 5-8-1970 requesting to extend educational concessions to the Christian converts irrespective of generations. In the reply dated 8-9-1970 it has been pointed out that the benefits of educational concessions have been extended to the converts upto 7 generations and that Christian converts from Scheduled Castes are eligible for the benefit of 1% reservation allowed to the Other Backward Christians as per the orders issued on Kumara Pillai Commission Report.

43. The Catholic Congress in a memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister of Kerala on 29-10-1970 requested to remove this restriction of 7 generations and to withdraw the order demanding submission of generation certificates of the conversion to Christianity. Avasa Christava Samara Samithi also made identical requests to the Kerala Government. The Government by their order dated 11-1-1971 removed the said restriction of 7 generations and made the Scheduled Caste converts eligible to all the educational concessions irrespective of generation and relaxed the orders regarding the conversion certificate.

44. In October 1970, members of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha and Backward class Christian Federation (Kerala) marched on foot to Trivandrum, one batch starting from the Martyr's Tomb at Ankamaly in Central Kerala and another from Ayyappankovil in the eastern High Ranges. They then offered Satyagraha in front of the Secretariate for a number of days when the office-bearers of the Catholic Congress visited and guided them in their agitation and afterwards submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister on behalf of the Harijan Christians. Similar satyagrahas and protest public meetings were held in front of the District Headquarters also. The President of Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha, Sri K.F. Chacko undertook a hunger strike for 15 days in front of the Government Secretariate at Trivandrum. Only on the intervention of Minister Baby John and certain M.L.As., he stopped the hunger strike on 25-4-1971.

45. Under the auspices of the Catholic Association of Ahmednagar and on the initiative of Fr. L. Desai, sj., a huge state level protest meeting and demonstration were held at Ahmednagar (Maharashtra) on 2-5-1970. Among others Sri Annasabeh Shinde, the then Minister of State for Food and afterwards at the Centre attended the meeting when a Charter of Demands was drawn up and later on forwarded to the Central and State Governments.

46. A representation was made by Sri K.F. Chacko, President, Harijan Catholic Mahajana Sabha (Kerala) to the Government of Kerala on 30-5-1970 requesting that percentage

of reservation of seats in the Educational Institutions be increased. In the reply dated 27-9-1970 the Government pointed out that this can be considered only if the Christian converts from Scheduled Castes are included in the list of Scheduled Castes by the Government of India and that Government have been addressed to by Kerala Government in their letter dated 9-12-1969 to extend to christian converts all the concessions available to the Scheduled Castes.

47. In a letter dated 19-9-1970 addressed to the Secretary, Paravan Uplift Association, Madras, the Director of Harijan Welfare, Madras has clarified that the Scheduled Castes converted to Buddhism and Christianity from Hinduism are eligible for all concessions after their reconversion to Hinduism.

48. Pointing out that orders contained in the above letter dated 19-9-1970 from the Director of Harijan Welfare and a similar letter dated 23-10-1970 of Director of Backward classes are opposed to the secular character of the State, Chev. J.C. Rayan, the then President of C.U.I. sent a memorandum to the Government of Madras on 26-11-1970. He had also requested therein to cancel the said orders and restore freedom of conscience and religion. He had also warned that if discrimination of this kind is not removed, it will not help national integration which we are all endeavouring to promote.

49. Sri S.C. Jamir, the then Deputy Minister of State for Food, Government of India, speaking on a Bill before the Lok Sabha to amend the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Act as reported by a Joint Committee on 23-11-1970 pleaded with the Law Ministry for deleting a provision introduced by the Committee to deny statutory benefits to Tribes who embraced other religions like Islam or Christianity.

50. The Government of Kerala launched a scheme of acquiring house sites in every panchayat for the poor and the landless. 50% of such sites have been allotted to landless Harijan labours. This order excluded Christians converted from the Scheduled Castes from its purview. Against this

discrimination, organisations of Christian converts and Christian parishes protested. Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference also took up the matter with the Government and demanded equal treatment for the Christian converts also. Consequently the Government revised the earlier order and issued a fresh order dated 18-3-1972 extending the benefits of acquiring house sites in rural areas to scheduled caste converts and their descendants also.

51. The Catholic Union of India at its Annual General Meeting held in Mangalore on 18-4-1971 exhaustively considered the problem of Scheduled Caste Christians and also ways and means to solve it. On a resolution moved by Sri G.S. Reddi, Harijan Converts Welfare Enquiry Sub Committee consisting of (1) Sri G.S. Reddi (2) Fr. Jerome D'Souza, (3) Fr. L. Desai, sj. (4) Sri S. Chinnappar, (5) Sri L. Gonsalves and (6) A.G. Augustine as the Convener was appointed to make an in-depth study of the problem and suggest solutions thereof. Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil and Sri Simon Tigga M.L.A. were co-opted to the committee. The voluminous Report published by the Committee in 1973 is a landmark in the struggle for justice. It has been hailed as a great achievement and a solid monument by many eminent persons and organisations. H.E. Valerian Cardinal Gracias has in his letter dated 23-5-1973 commended that it is indeed a valuable Report. Copies of the Report were forwarded to the Prime Minister, State Chief Ministers, Cardinals, all the Bishops, organisations etc., far and wide. The Report gave a new inspiration and added a momentum to the efforts in the cause of the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin.

52. An Action Committee consisting of the members of the Enquiry Sub-Committee was constituted by C.U.I. annual General Meeting held at Salem on 27-4-1973.

53. Chev. D.V. D'Monte, President of C.U.I. presented memoranda to Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India and Sri. M. Karunanidhi, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at Bangalore on 5-5-1973 along with copies of the C.U.I. Enquiry Committee Report and pleaded to end

the discrimination shown to the Harijan Christian converts and requested for the amendment of the President's Order of 1950.

54. Under the auspices of Kerala Avasa Christava Samyukta Samathi (Kerala Backward Christians Joint Council) a South Indian Christian Leaders' Seminar was held at Thiruvalla on 13th and 14th July, 1973 to study the C.U.I. sub-Committee Report and to highlight the problems of Harijan Christians. Heads of Churches of different Christian denominations, delegates of Scheduled Caste Christian organisations, etc., participated in the two-day Seminar. The concluding public meeting was inaugurated by Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorio of Trivandrum. A number of resolutions calling upon the Government to do justice to the Christian converts were adopted at the Seminar.

55. In reply to a petition dated 6-9-1973 presented by A.G. Augustine, the then Vice President of Catholic Union of India, Director of Technical Education, Government of Kerala, in his letter No. F1-12128/Mis/73 dated 20-10-1973 clarified that there is no discrimination between the Scheduled Caste Students and Christian students converted from Scheduled Castes in the case of minimum marks for selection to the Engineering Diploma or Degree courses.

56. All Kerala Catholic Congress at its annual general meeting held on 4-3-1973 passed a resolution requesting the Government that the special treatment given to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the matter of allotment of excess land under Kerala Land Reforms Act may be extended to Harijans converted to Christianity. The Government has clarified in their reply letter dated 13-11-1973 addressed to the then General Secretary Sri N.K. Jose that the Government has specified converts from Scheduled Castes to any religion as socially and economically backward classes of citizens and that therefore those converts are also benefitted by the preferential treatment allowed for the allotment of excess land.

57. C.B.C.I. appointed an ad-hoc committee for Christian Harijan Welfare with Bishop Thumma as Chair-

man to study the Harijan Christian problem and report the modus operandi to be employed in implementing the recommendations made in C.U.I. Enquiry Committee Report. He issued an explanatory circular to all Bishops on the subject on 17-7-1974.

58. The first All-India Action Programme was chalked out by Sri G.S. Reddi when he became the President of Catholic Union in 1974. The programme consisted of prayer/protest meetings and demonstrations in different dioceses all over India from 13th to 20th April, 1975 with the co-operation of the CBCI, different Christian denominations and non-christian leaders. Processions, rallies, and public meetings were held all over the country. Sri. F.M.Z. Choudhary, President of Catholic Association of Punjab conducted a 24-hour token hunger strike in Jullunder. Thousands of telegrams and post-cards protesting against the discrimination were sent to the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and State Chief Ministers from all parts of India. Special Community masses and prayers were also conducted in all the churches. This programme helped to awaken the whole Christian Community to the need to work for the cause of the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin. Their cause consequently became the cause of the entire Christian Church and community. A deputation of Christian leaders under the leadership of Sri G.S. Reddi met Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister and represented to her the grievances of the community in the matter.

59. In response to numerous representations from Christian Associations, the Government of Tamil Nadu by their Order dated 16-9-1975 directed that all concessions granted to Scheduled Castes (Hindus) by the State government be extended to Scheduled Caste Converts to Christianity also except in the case of reservation in educational institutions and public services irrespective of generation of conversion. This order which was challenged by Hindu Mission, Salem, in a writ petition has been upheld by Madras High Court.

60. On 12-6-1975 a conference of Christian leaders was held at Madras under the auspices of National Christian Council of India. Representatives of CUI also actively participated in it when papers were presented and resolutions were adopted against the discrimination shown to Harijan Christians. At the annual general meeting of the Catholic Union held in Calcutta in May, 1975, in the place of the Action Committee, a Commission for Harijan Welfare was constituted with Sri A.G. Augustine as Chairman and Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil as Convener.

61. On behalf of the Kerala Christian Bishops' committee, four Bishops representing different Christian denominations submitted a memorandum to Kerala Chief Minister on 10-10-1975 requesting the Government to do full Justice to the Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin.

62. In accordance with the decision of CBCI meeting held at Hyderabad in January, 1976 a CBCI-CUI Joint Committee for Harijan Welfare with Bishop Thumma as Chairman was constituted in February, 1976. Archbishop D. Athaide, Osm, cap., of Agra, Bishop Cornelius Elanjikal of Vijayapuram (Kerala) and Rev. Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil (Secretary) representing CBCI. Chev. D.V. D'Monte, Sri A.G. Augustine, Sri M.S. Muthu and Sri E. Jayachandra Raj (Joint Secretary) representing Catholic Union of India are the other members of the Committee.

63. Bishop Thumma as Chairman of CBCI-CUI Committee for Harijan Welfare presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on 3-8-1976, about the discrimination shown against Christians of Scheduled Caste origin and requested for removal of the same.

64. A high powered National delegation of Catholic leaders led by Chev. D.V. D'Monte, President of CUI met the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi on 21-9-1976 and submitted a memorandum about the said economic plight of four million christians of Scheduled Caste origin who suffered discrimination solely on grounds of religion. M/s. G.S. Reddi, P. Anthony Reddy, M.P. and Sri

E. Jayachandra Raj, Executive Secretary, CUI were among the members of the delegation.

65. In October 1976 Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum and Archbishop Anthony Padiyara of Changanacherry met the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at New Delhi and presented her a memorandum on behalf of the Christian Community in Kerala requesting to modify Articles 341 and 342 providing therein that in specifying the castes, tribes or groups no distinction shall be made on the ground of religion.

66. A delegation of Christian leaders under the auspices of All-India Scheduled Castes Christian Association met the Prime Minister at New Delhi on 2-11-1976 and presented her a memorandum requesting the Government to include the downtrodden christian untouchables in the list of Scheduled Castes.

67. The Catholic Association of Bangalore took active interest in seeking a solution of the problem of Harijan converts to Christianity by submitting memoranda to the Prime Minister, Chief Minister of Karnataka and the other Ministers concerned in 1976. The Association made representations before the Karnataka and the other Ministers concerned in 1976. The Association made representations before the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission also. As a result of these efforts the backward sections among the Christians have at least been now included in the Backward Classes list in the State.

68. In August, 1977 the Catholic Bishops of West Bengal met the new Chief Minister Sri Jyoti Basu and presented him a memorandum with annexed documents taken from CUI Harijan Welfare Enquiry Committee Report on the plight of Harijan Christians.

69. In Gujarat an Association called "Akhil Gujarat Khristi Samaj Utkarsha Sangh" has been formed with the aim of working for the betterment of Christians especially those of Scheduled Caste origin. Public opinion is being mobilised throughout the State in their favour. Under the auspices of

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the Sangh, memorandum have been submitted to the State Chief Minister and members of the Legislative Assembly.

70. By G.O.MS. 39/77/DD dated 9-3-1977 the Government of Kerala have ordered that the loan facilities now extended by Kerala State Development Corporation for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes limited to Harijan Hindus will also be extended to Harijans converted to Christianity.

71. Responding to representations received from time to time the Government of Andhra Pradesh have by G.O. MS. No. 341 dated 30-8-1977 decided to extend all non-statutory concessions now available to Scheduled Castes (Hindus) to Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity and Buddhism, but statutory concessions i.e., reservation in educational institutions and public services are available only to Scheduled Castes with reference to the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order of 1950.

72. Under the auspices of All-India Scheduled Caste Christians Leaders Council a delegation of representatives from various states met Prime Minister Sri Morarji Desai in New Delhi on 30-9-1977 and presented him a memorandum on the discrimination against Scheduled Caste Christians. Archbishop of Agra, Sri G.S. Reddi, M.P., Sri Pulavar Mariadas, Dr. M.C. Paul, Sri M.S. Arockiadas and Fr. De Meulder were among the members of the delegation.

73. At the annual general meeting of CUI held in Madras on 1-5-1977 a resolution requesting the Government of India to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order 1950 was adopted. Sri G.S. Reddi, M.P. has now given notice of a Bill to amend the said Order in order to delete para 3 thereof which stands in the way of extending all the benefits and concessions to the Christians of Scheduled Caste origin discriminating them on the basis of religion. The Bill if passed by the Parliament will remove for ever the disabilities suffered by these Christians.

74. At the CBCI General Meeting held in Mangalore in January, 1978, the problem of Scheduled Caste Christians

again came up for serious consideration. Cardinal Picachy, President of CBCI in his presidential address highlighted this problem and identified it as one of the urgent ones to be tackled if the scales of justice are to be balanced in our society. In the final statement issued by the Conference, the Bishops emphasised that they are committed to struggle on behalf of the Scheduled Caste Christians so that the present discrimination practised against them on the basis of religion may soon end.

75. Representatives of Akhil Gujarat Khristi Samaj Utkarsha Sangh led by Fr. M. Herrero, sj., met the Chief Minister of Gujarat on 17-3-1978 and impressed upon him the need to accord to Christian converts from Scheduled Castes the same benefits to which their Hindu brethren are entitled and until this is done, these Christians would be victims of religious discrimination. The Chief Minister pleaded that the problem has to be solved at the Centre and he cannot do anything in the matter.

76. Baksi Panch Committee appointed by the Government of Gujarat to study the conditions of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes has recommended that Christian Converts from the Scheduled Castes should be given the concessions available to other backward classes. Accepting the recommendations made by the said Committee in their Report, the Government of Gujarat has now included the Christian converts among the other 82 backward classes in the State. The Chief Minister has announced that the recommendations of the said Committee would be implemented with effect from 1-4-1978 and the benefits now available to other Backward classes would be extended to those Christian Converts also.

77. On behalf of Tamil Nadu Christian Depressed and Backward Classes Kazhagam, Sri, T.R. Pinheiro, President, Sri D. Ambrose, Vice President and Sri R. Rubin Secretary forwarded on 26-1-1978 an appeal to all the members of Parliament to support the cause of Christians of Scheduled Caste origin for equal treatment and avail the opportunity of the introduction of Sri G.S. Reddi's Bill in the Parliament to see that Justice is done to them.

78. The above is a brief narration of the various efforts made from time to time for the amelioration of the miserable conditions of the Christians of Scheduled Castes origin and for ending the discrimination and injustice perpetrated against them. We do not claim that this Report is exhaustive and complete. There may be many other efforts made by various Christian leaders and organisations, but as there is no record of the same, we regret our inability to include them in this Report.

79. This National Convention of Christian Leaders to be held at the National Centre (NBCLC) Bangalore, 15-19 June, 1978 will make an in-depth study of the plight of Christians of Scheduled Caste origin from various angles and spotlight their problems. It is hoped that this Convention will open an inspiring chapter in the history of the struggle for Justice and equal treatment and make a joint effort to formulate effective and action-oriented programmes for the solution of the problem which has been agitating our minds for several years now.

Dated 7th May, 1978.

A.G. Augustine, Chairman, Documentation Committee.	
Fr. Joseph Kochuparambil, Convener	—do—
G.S. Reddi, M.P., Member	—do—
Thomas Thachedan, —do—	—do—

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